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AUTHOR Rockwell, Judith Marlene
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ABSTRACT

This practicum involved developing and implementing a comprehensive writing program to improve the academic achievement and increase the writing ability of five home/hospital students in a central Florida county. The target group of home/hospital students was assigned to an eighth grade language arts class. Writing techniques used to build writing skills via teleclass instruction included: students created an expository essay on a topic of their choice, a "Who am I?" essay, different types of paragraphs, expository and persuasive essays, and biographical compositions; students were introduced to writing resource books; students discussed skills involved in reading to others, listening skills, note-taking skills, and skills for cooperative learning; students learned about the writing process, thinking skills, and types of essays; and students shared their essays and discussed with each other their strengths and weaknesses. Student success was measured by comparing first and second semester grades and scores from the Florida Grade 8 Writing Assessment. An anticipated score of three points or higher on the holistic scoring rubric was not achieved, but a score equivalent to the average score of other eighth grades in the district was achieved, and grade point average increased from 1.8 to 2.75. Appendices provide assessment results and a writing syllabus. (Contains 21 references.) (JDD)

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ED 374 601

INCREASING GRADES AND IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF WRITING OF 8TH GRADE HOME/HOSPITAL STUDENTS WITH A COMPREHENSIVE WRITING CURRICULUM

by

Judith Marlene Rockwell

A Practicum Report

Submitted to the Faculty of the Center for Advancement
of Education of Nova University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science.

July 1994

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Abstract - Final Report

Increasing Grades and Improving the Quality of Writing of 8th Grade Home/ Hospital Students with a Comprehensive Writing Curriculum.
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Descriptors: Secondary Education/ Writing/ Middle Schools/ Writing Difficulties/ Writing Improvements/ Writing Skills/ Self Evaluation/ Cooperative Learning/ Holistic Evaluation/

A comprehensive writing program was developed and implemented by the writer to improve the academic achievement and increase the writing ability of five Home/Hospital students in a central Florida county. The target group of Home/Hospital students were assigned to an eighth grade language arts class for their duration on the program. The author employed different writing techniques to build writing skills used in students' teleclass instruction. The researcher measured students' success by comparing first and second semester grades and scores from the Florida Grade 8 Writing Assessment.

The results indicated that an anticipated score of three points or higher on the holistic scoring rubric was not achieved, a slightly lower score of 2.5 was achieved. This was equivalent to the average score achieved, however by other eighth grades in the district. Grade point average, as measured by report card grades did increase from 1.8 to 2.75, an increase of .95. This shows that writing skills had improved, indicating that students were acquiring new writing skills.

Appendix S

Authorship Statement/Document release

Authorship Statement

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. Where it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give this testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of other workers in the field and in the hope that my work, presented here, will earn similar respect.

Judith Marlene Rockwell
student's signature

Document Release

Permission is hereby given to Nova University to distribute copies of this applied research project on request from interested parties. It is my understanding that Nova University will not charge for this dissemination other than to cover the costs of duplicating, handling, and mailing of the materials.

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July 1, 1994
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Appendix N

Practicum Observer Verification Form

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3301 College Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33314

Verification of Practicum Activity

Dear Observer:

Practicum students in Nova's M.S. and Ed.S. programs are asked to provide external verification that the project activities reported in their final practicum documents took place as described. You have been designated an observer to fulfill this confirmation function by the student named below. On this sheet, then, please write a note attesting to your knowledge of the project activity described in the final practicum report to which this will be attached. (Note that you are not asked to evaluate or make judgements about the quality of the project.)

Practicum Title Increasing Grades and Improving the Quality of Writing of 8th Grade Home/Hospital Students with a Comprehensive Writing Curriculum

Student's Name Judith Marlene Rockwell

Program Site Daytona Beach, Fl Date

Observer's Name Mary Lou Peffer — Mary Lou Peffer
(please print---sign)

Observer's position Chairman, Home/Hospital Phone # 904-226-1638

Observer's comment on impact of the project (handwritten):

I felt that the practicum as developed by Mrs. Rockwell was useful to the students in her language arts class. The results of her efforts will help other teleclass teachers as they follow these guidelines for writing activities in Home/Hospital middle school language arts classes.

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CHAPTER I

Purpose

The target group for this practicum was in a central Florida school district. Students were selected from an eighth grade Language Arts class in the Home/Hospital Program. The State of Florida Home Hospital Program was developed by the legislature to provide educational services for students who are medically diagnosed with physical or mental conditions. Students are confined to their home or a hospital and their activities are constricted for an extended period of time. For students to be eligible for the Home Hospital Program the following criteria required in state rule

6A - 6.03020 (3), FAC must be met:

> A. Certification by a licensed physician(s) as specified in Rule 6A-6.03020 (2), FAC, that the student is expected to be absent from school due to a physical or mental condition for at least (15) consecutive school days, or due to a chronic condition for at least fifteen (15) school days which need not run consecutively and will be able to participate in and benefit from an instructional program.
>
> B. Student is under medical care for illness or injury which is acute or catastrophic in nature.
>
> C. Certification by a licensed physician as specified in Rule 6A-6.03020 (2), FAC, that the student can receive an instructional program without endangering the health of the instructor or other students with whom the instructor may come in contact.

D. Student is enrolled in a public school prior to the referral for the homebound or hospitalized program, unless the student meets criteria for eligibility under Rule 6A-6.03011, 6A-6.03012, 6A-6.03013, 6A-6.03014, 6A-6.03015, 6A-6.03016, 6A-6.03018, 6A-6.03019, 6A-6.3021, 6A-6.03022, 6A-6.03023, 6A-6.03024, and 6A-6.03025, FAC.

E. A parent, guardian, or primary caregiver signs parental agreement concerning homebound, or hospitalized policies and parental cooperation forms.

F. The age of eligibility for a student is pre-kindergarten or age three through graduation or age 21 if appropriate.

The Home Hospital Program in this central Florida county started over thirty years ago to provide educational services for children with an illness or injuries that prevented attendance in regular school for three weeks or longer. This short term program continues academic instruction at home or in the hospital for a student who is physically or emotionally too ill to attend school. Some students may require long term instruction, but their placement must be reviewed annually to continue in the program. Any public school student or private school student is eligible who meets the district's criteria.

Private schools may request Home/Hospital service for their students. The parent should enroll their child in their zoned public school, then apply for Home/Hospital instruction through that school. There is no waiting period before applying for Home/Hospital service, but as soon as it is anticipated that a student will be out of regular school three weeks or longer an application for Home/Hospital instruction should be completed. Application forms for Home/Hospital services are available in all public schools. Parents, school

personnel, or community agencies may request the service for students of school age (K-12) or who meet special criteria for the district. Pre-K ESE (Exceptional Student Education) children who meet the criteria for the Home/Hospital Program can also be served. There is no cost to parents for the Home/Hospital Program, it is a part of the free public school education available to all students who are determined eligible. Students can be taught in all of the county's hospitals, however some private facilities provide their own instructors and do not request the county's Home/Hospital services.

Students can maintain their academic studies in the Home/Hospital Program if certain criteria are met. First, the student should be referred without delay by the school and the physician. The student must be able to do the assigned work, homework, and be willing to participate in class activities. The parents must provide an adequate environment for instruction and learning to take place. Cooperation between the student's regular school and the Home/Hospital School is vital to assure the student's successful transition.

If a student is referred for emotional illness the physician must be a psychiatrist. A mental health therapist may provide counseling for the student with approval from the referring psychiatrist. Students must be in an ongoing therapy program to remain in the Home/Hospital Program.

Pregnant students are eligible for the Home/Hospital Program if medical complications occur. Students with normally progressing pregnancies without

medical complications are not eligible unless the student is attending an elementary school.

Student participation in extra curricular and social activities may be limited. Although some activities may be part of the student's recovery process, attendance at social functions and school related programs such as prom, parties, and athletic events should be severely restricted. Students may not keep their part-time job. If they are well enough to work it is presumed they are well enough to attend regular school. Home/Hospital service is only provided while there is a continuing medical need which must be validated by a physician annually or more often. It is not intended to replace the total school program for most students. Parents are urged to re-enter their student in regular school as soon as the student's health permits as certified by the physician.

Home/Hospital instruction can be provided by a teacher one-on-one in the home or hospital or through a telecommunication program called teleclass. Teleclass is a telephone conference call format that can provide instruction for a small group of students. Depending upon the mechanical equipment used 3 - 30 students can be teleconferenced at once, but the optimum number is three to eight students. In order to make the learning environment as successful as possible, students are provided with headset or speakerphone units, the same textbooks, and other instructional materials. Teleclass teachers do not use assignments from the student's regular school, but are responsible for the design and implementation of their own curriculum based on district guidelines. Instruction by the teacher from

a distant site must be clearly directed and specifically designed to impart instruction that students can easily and quickly understand.

The research for this practicum addressed teaching language arts to eighth grade students who were instructed through the Home/Hospital teleclass program. The identified group of students in this study came from regular eighth grade classrooms throughout the district. At the time of this research there were five eighth graders participating in the teleclass program. (Although one student left the district during the fourth quarter). These students received teleclass instruction for all their academic subjects including language arts, reading, mathematics, social studies, and science. Each class was fifty minutes long and met twice a week for a total of ten instructional hours. To compare this with the regular school program, eighth grade language art classes last sixty minutes and meet five days a week. The student to teacher ratio however, is generally 25 to one in the regular classroom and eight or fewer to one on teleclass. Because of the individual attention, the teleclass instructors are generally able to provide the same curriculum within a shorter time period.

This researcher has a degree and certification in English plus three years experience in the middle school prior to becoming a teleclass instructor. This is the researcher's second year in the Home/Hospital teleclass program and sixth year working with homebound students. This experience and knowledge provided a unique opportunity to identify learning problems faced by students confined to home or hospital. The need for clear and concise communication is essential to

the success of the teleclass instructional program especially in the field of language arts.

The five students this researcher chose comprised the eighth grade language arts class. The target group consisted of three females and two male students, all of whom were white. These students did not attend school for an extended period of time. The target students were taught two days a week, on Monday and Wednesday for fifty minutes.

The target students' levels of achivement varied among the students. The Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) scores for the students came from the1991, 1992, or 1993 language sub-section. The academic grades on their report card came from the langauge arts classes from 1992 (sixth grade), 1993 (seventh grade), and 1994 (eighth grade, first and second semesters). The following scores were from the CTBS language sub-section and academic grades were taken from students' report cards which was based on the four point grading scale (i.e. four points equal an A, three points equal a B, two points equal a C, one point equals a D, and 0 point equals an F).

TABLE I

Target Group Achievement Scores

STUDENT	CTBS	1992 GPA	1993 GPA	1994 GPA*	**
1	32%	3	0	1	1
2	55%	4	4	4	4
3	79%	3	4	4	4
4	12%	1	0	0	***
5	32%	2	0	0	2

*First Semester

**Second Semester

*** Results were not computated because the student left the county district.

Problem Statement

This researcher addressed the writing problems faced by the majority of students in school today. Effective writing is a problem for students because they lack the writing skills to produce effective expository, narrative, persuasive, and creative essays. For middle school students to write an expository, narrative, creative, or persuasive essay, it is required they be able to write complete sentences, paragraphs that have a main idea with enough supporting details that focus on the topic with a organized pattern, and to understand the different types of essays they are addressing. This researcher designed a sequenced writing program that addressed the needs in a hierarchy for students. They learned to write effective expository, narrative, persuasive, and descriptive essays.

Tchudi and Mitchell (1989) indicated that all writing is creative and research based because a writer must conduct research into his own experiences and feelings, and then decide how this knowledge will fit into his understanding of the world. The differences between expository, persuasive, narrative, and creative writing is not black and white, but is within degrees of each other.

Students must realize that in order to communicate effectively, they must learn that writing offers many options to expression. They will learn to think and organize their thoughts on paper by various methods. Murray (1973) indicated that writing should be taught as a useful skill, used both inside the classroom and outside in the world. Students must understand the focus of their writing. This process of self discovery will open the door of minds and help them express their

feelings and seek knowledge. Not only does writing offer self expression, but is also satisfies the human need for communication.

This researcher surveyed several teleclass and middle school teachers about the quality of their students' writing and found all agreed that students lack the skills to produce effective writing. All agreed that students have a difficult time producing a well organized paragraph, because they cannot write a complete sentence and focus the supporting statements on the main idea. Some teachers felt that students' inability to write complete thoughts stem from the influence of television and other factors in society that decrease their critical thinking skills. Teachers agreed that the students need to be taught how to develop a main idea and give enough details to support the main idea. Organization is critical to the flow and transition of paragraphs and most teachers felt students are weak in this area. Teachers agreed that students create too many fragments because of their incomplete thoughts and produce run-ons, subject verb agreement errors, punctuation, and spelling errors too frequently. It was stressed that students must learn to produce complete thoughts when writing sentences and be able to write a clear statement of the main idea and support it. The writing should be relevant and well organized with an effective conclusion, thus creating a well organized paragraph. With this task being accomplished, teachers felt students would succeed at writing effective essays. First, students need to understand the criteria required for the different types of writing.

This author chose the 1993 Florida Writing Assessment Scoring Method and Rubric for Holistic scoring for the eighth grade to score the pre-test and post-test for the target group.

> Holistic scoring is a method by which trained readers evaluate a piece of writing for its overall quality. The holistic scoring used in Florida requires readers to evaluate the work as a whole, while considering four elements: focus, organization, support, and conventions. In this type of scoring, readers are trained not to become overly concerned with any one aspect of writing but to look at a response as a whole. (Florida Bureau of Education Information and Assessment Services, 1993: 9)

The target group for this practicum came from regular eighth grade classrooms throughout the district. At the time of this research there were five eighth grade students participating in this research. The identified target group was selected from the researcher's teleclass program because they were the students this researcher taught and because of their ineffective writing skills. The students were instructed through the Home/Hospital Teleclass program in all of their subjects. Each language arts class was fifty minutes long and met twice a week for the duration they were on teleclass. The students' pre-test showed sixty percent of the students' scores were below the average which was a score of three for effective writing. This score of two on the holistic scoring rubric shows where they were in the beginning, and a score between three and six shows where they should be on the holistic scoring rubric. This discrepancy in writing was shown in their pre-test scores and in observations made with the various types of writing assignments.

Sixty percent of this researchers targeted students have failed at least two years of language arts in middle school.

Thirty-nine percent of the 1,526 students tested in Volusia County on the Spring 1993 Florida Grade 8 Writing Assessment Census Test scored below the average score of three on the holistic scoring rubric when writing to persuade or convince the reader. Twenty-two percent of the 1,526 students tested on the same test scored below the average score of three when writing to explain. (Appendix A: 1) This indicates, along with the observations in the class, that students do not take a firm stand for or against an argument when writing to persuade or convince a reader, nor do students provide adequate support in their writings. The targeted group's average writing score on the holistic scoring rubric scale was 2.04, which is below average. This group should score at least average or above, at least an average of three on the rubric scale.

Outcome Objectives

The goal of this practicum was to develop and teach students on Home/ Hospital instruction a sequential writing program that would improve their writing ability and increase the the quality of their essays as measured by a holistic scoring rubric developed by the Assessment Advisory Committee for the State of Florida Bureau of Education Information and Assessment Services for the Eighth Grade Writing Assessment tests. Students were expected to improve the quaility of their writings and be able to understand and differentiate the different types of writing assignments available and the purpose for each. Students need a purpose for their

writing assignments in order to learn from it. The following were the objectives for this practicum:

1. After twelve weeks of implementing a sequenced writing instructional program, eighty percent of the eighth grade language arts Home/Hospital students would improve their holistic scores in writing essays by twenty percent as measured by the holistic scoring rubric on the post-test.

2. After a period of twelve weeks of practicum implementation the average grade point average (G.P.A.) in language arts would increase from 1.8 to at least a 2.8 G.P.A. as measured by the four point scale grade average in language arts on the report card.

CHAPTER II

Research and Solution Strategy

Research

Murray (1973) indicated that writing is a skill which can unlock the language arts. Writing should be taught as a useful skill, used both inside the classroom and outside in the world. Students must realize that in order to communicate effectively, they must learn that writing offers many options to expression. They will learn to think, and organize their thoughts on paper by various methods of pre-writing activities. This process of self-discovery will hopefully open the doors of their mind to express their feelings and to further seek knowledge. This cycle of writing and reading will teach them how to focus on their own words and to find out if what they said is what they meant to say. If it is not, they will revise their writing to communicate more effectively. Not only does writing offer self expression for people, but is also satisfies the human need for communication.

Students have had a strong need to affiliate. According to Cohen (1990), Davidson and O'Leary (1990), and Johnson and Johnson (1985) students have developed trust and have taken risks more comfortably in a small group than in a larger class. In groups they can practice role assignments and learn to transfer ideas from one setting to another. Students' retention has been closely related to

their communication with others, as opposed to them learning individually. Not only does cooperative learning extend students' thinking, it has also been effective with various learning styles.

For students to feel confident in assessing their own work, they have needed to feel confident in what they have written. When students have chosen their own topics to write about, they enjoyed the writing assignment. Students have had immediate feedback on their writing when they shared it with a peer. Cooperative learning has significantly increased students' achievement and promoted positive interpersonal relationships among students (Johnson and Johnson, 1985). Special methods such as specific role assignments and proper implementation must have been incorporated for cooperative learning to be successful in the classroom and for student achievement.

Encouraging students to share their writings with their peers has helped them develop a trust among each other. While working together through the many stages of writing, they may have also offered suggestions for more effective writing. The group helped each other by pointing out to the student where the paper worked and did not work, or where the paper needed clarifying. Structuring the classroom to promote students working together successfully was strongly supported by Johnson and Johnson (1985).

Johnson and Johnson (1985) conducted a meta-analysis in 1981 in which they analyzed 122 studies from 1924 - 1981 for the purpose of examining the research on student-student interaction patterns and achievement. Their results showed that over a range of age groups, subject areas, and learning activities, the

finding remained stable and they concluded that cooperative learning experiences were inclined to promote more learning than did competitive or individual learning experiences. The researcher did note that not all learning should be designed to be cooperative learning because students do need to learn how to compete appropriately with others and also be able to work individually.

One of the problems students have in writing essays is their low motivation to finalize their work to the publication state. Maimon (1988) discussed several approaches teachers can use to motivate students to write more effectively and completely. First, teachers needed to change the way they perceive students' writings. Maimon stated that teachers should focus away from "what this is not" to "what the student can make this become." Instead of correcting the mistakes, teachers needed to focus on the content and make specific comments on what was wrong with the content. Maimon used a metaphor for the students' initial writing drafts. Students need to think of their writing as a packet of seeds that must be nurtured and allowed to grow. Just as a gardener cultivates a garden, so should a teacher help the students cultivate their writings.

Audience interaction may have also motivated students toward success in their writing by giving them immediate feedback. Maimon (1988) stated that most students turned in their writings without reading them after they wrote them. Teachers have frustrated themselves by trying to correct all the mistakes, while becoming more frustrated with the student's work. However, this cycle can be eliminated by looking at each initial draft as a packet of seeds, or as a beginning, as Maimon stated. Just as seeds needs nurturing through each stage of growth,

so does a piece of writing need nurturing through each stage of development. Teachers needed to redirect their focus by helping students with each stage while their work was progressing. A teacher must become the gardener for students' writing by assisting them through each stage of development and helping that seed of writing grow and develop.

Students needed to be taught how to use their resources to help them create writings for which they could be proud. Tchudi and Mitchell (1989) indicated that all writing was creative and research based, because writers must conduct research into their own experiences and feelings, and then decide how this knowledge will fit into their understanding of the world. The differences between expository, persuasive, narrative, and creative writing is not black and white, but is within degrees of each other. Gaymer (1985) discussed how observation enhanced creativity in writing. Educators needed to pay more attention to the parts of the whole instead of the sum. Becoming more aware of surroundings and practicing observation exercises enhanced creativity. Gaymer stated that good observation was flowing rather than drifting. Students needed to be actively looking for something. Just as a camera zoomed in on a picture, students may have zoomed in on their environment, thus creating more effective writings.

Hillocks (1987) indicated that writing was an enormously complex task demanding at least four types of knowledge. The four types of knowledge necessary for the composing process:

1. knowledge of the content to be written about;
2. procedural knowledge that enables the manipulation of content;

3. knowledge of discourse structures, including the schemata underlying various types of writing, syntactic forms, and the conventions of punctuation and usage; and
4. procedural knowledge that enables the production of a piece of writing of a particular type.

The first two types of knowledge were the students basic level of thinking, which was recalling information and then converting this information into content. For students to write more effectively they needed to know how to tap into their memory source. Teachers taught them on how to use pre-writing activities that helped them write longer and more effectively.

Helping students to utilize the data they have stored in their memory and teaching them the different types of writing and the purpose of each has been very important. Knowing the characteristics of the different types of writing has not helped students write a paragraph or essay correctly, but it has given them the information they needed to get started with the production of the writing assignment. Hillocks (1987) indicated that the most important knowledge needed for writing was the procedural knowledge for the composing process and the specific strategies for the production of the writing and the convertion of data for use in writing.

Moving students from personal narratives, descriptive, and expository writings to persuasive writings provided students with the different types of writing exercises and the purposes for each. While elementary schools focused on story telling and more creative types of writing, secondary schools focused on

expository and persuasive types of writing (with the latter being taught in the higher grades). Critical thinking was utilized more in persuasive writing than in any other type of writing because a student must have examined a problem or situation presented, and then decided which side of the argument the student would take. Further, students must have taken an active stand in their appeal for or against something and supported their view with facts. Grabill (1992) indicated that the purpose of persuasive writing in a democratic society was to use it to get in touch with people who could make a difference.

Britton's (1970) classic work stated that children learned to write by writing, and it would improve with practice. Students should have learned about their personal and public world in order to write effectively. They learned to structure their language when they learned to structure their ideas. Educators helped students learn to shape their ideas by writing. The more students wrote and learned to manipulate the language, the more effective they became at producing quality essays.

In a position paper, Ediger (1991) stated that emerging adolescents should have ample opportunity to present creative ideas in written form. The content of their writings must be owned by the student, not the textbook or the teacher. With personal ownership the learner experimented with new ideas in an innovative writing curriculum. Young writers have needed to feel freedom in being non-conformist and expressing ideas of intrinsic worth. For readiness activities, the learner chose the title and type of prose or poetry to write. Students needed perseverance on self started projects in order to fully develop their writings. The

creative middle school teacher set the stage and provide readiness experiences. By stimulating and encouraging adolescents to appreciate and value the writing process, the students valued creativity in their school work.

Knudson (1989) conducted a study on the effects of instructional strategies on children's informational writings. Students were instructed through one of the following:

a. presentation of model pieces of writing that focused on the product of good writing;
b. presentation of scales, questions, and criteria that focused on the process of writing by explicitly stating the criteria for good writing;
c. presentation of both model pieces of writing and scales, questions, and criteria - a combined approach involving both product and process strategies; and
d. free writing, a form of procedural facilitation (external supports) in which students were provided with pictures and asked to write about them.

Informational writing was taught to 138 students in grades 4, 6, and 8 in a school district in southern California. Students in this group were randomly assigned to each of the instructional strategies. Students were instructed in writing for 14 days, twenty minutes a day. At the end of the experiment and again two weeks after it ended, the researcher collected writing samples from each of the students. The most effective strategy was the presentation of model pieces of writing followed by free writing. Although above average readers wrote better than below

average readers for the free writing group, both below and above average readers wrote at about the same level.

In another Knudson study, Knudson (1992) investigated the effectiveness of four instructional strategies on student argumentative writing at the 10th and 12th grade levels. There were no significant differences in the effectiveness of the four instructional strategies, which included instruction with model pieces of writing; scales, questions, and criteria to guide writing with models in scales and free writing activities. Overall, relatively few students included opposition or response to opposition in their essays. Knudson believed that students' use of data was what probably influenced their knowledge about the topic. McCann (1989) also reported differences in student argumentative writing knowledge and ability at three grade levels (6, 9, and 12). McCann's results indicated that elementary and high school students had knowledge about argument, but that older students were more effective in writing argument. McCann found that sixth grade students were less effective in using claims and warrants than ninth and twelfth grades. Thus, McCann concluded that older students wrote arguments more effectively, but that students at all three grade levels had difficulty producing some of the features of arguments.

In 1990 the Florida legislature mandated the assessment of student writing in order to improve statewide assessment and test the higher level of thinking skills. The Florida Writing Assessment Program was established in response to this mandate. The development of the program began in the winter of 1991. By February 1993, all eligible eighth graders from around the state of Florida

participated in the census test. Involved in the assessment were 117,275 students in 545 middle and junior high schools. Each student wrote a response to one of two prompts that were randomly assigned within the classroom. The prompts were randomly assigned to students for the purpose of expository or persuasive writings. Students were given 45 minutes to independently read the prompt, plan, and write their responses to the prompt on the provided four-page writing folder, but were instructed to write only the amount necessary to complete the assignment.

The students' 1993 Writing Assessment Census Test were scored in April 1993 in Tampa. Prior to the scoring session of the papers, six members of the Eighth Grade Writing Assessment Advisory Committee met to read responses written by Florida students and to determine the holistic scoring rubric and to select papers to represent each score point. These papers were then used by the scoring contractor, Data Recognition Corporation, to train readers for the scoring of students' responses.

Dunthorn, a program specialist for the Florida Statewide Assessment Program, told this researcher in a telephone interview, that the Student Assessment Services Department of the Department of Education had reviewed the latest advances in writing assessment. The Florida Assessment Services contacted other states that already had a writing assessment program to learn of their programs pros and cons, strengths and weaknesses. It was learned that by the time Florida was entering the writing production assessment program, thirty other states had been using such measurements for years, some as long as fifteen years.

In Florida an advisory committee was assigned for each grade level, and based on the information gleaned from other states, they determined that holistic grading would give a truer picture of students' writing. That is, the whole writing assignment should be looked at when assessment takes place.

The six members of the Eighth Grade Writing Assessment Advisory Committee (Florida Bureau of Education Information and Assessment Services 1993: 7) determined the score points in the holistic scoring rubric by reading students' responses.

> The rubric further interprets the four major areas of consideration into levels of achievement. The rubric used to score papers in spring 1993 is shown below.
>
> 6 Points - The writing is focused, purposeful, and reflects insight into the writing situation. The paper conveys a sense of completeness and wholeness with adherence to the main idea, and its organizational pattern provides for a logical progression of ideas. The support is substantial, specific, relevant, concrete, and/or illustrative. The paper demonstrates a commitment to and an involvement with the subject, clarity in presentation of ideas, and may use creative writing strategies appropriate to the purpose of the paper. The writing demonstrates a mature command of language (word choice) with freshness of expression. Sentence structure is varied, and sentences are complete except when fragments are purposefully used. Few, if any, convention errors occur in mechanics, usage, and punctuation.
>
> 5 Points - The writing focuses on the topic, and its organizational pattern provides for a progression of ideas, although some lapses may occur. The paper conveys a sense of completeness or wholeness. The support is ample. The writing demonstrate a mature command of language, including precision in word choice. There is variation in sentence structure, and, with rare exceptions, sentences are complete

> except when fragments are used purposefully. The paper generally follows the conventions of mechanics, usage, and spelling.
>
> 4 Points - The writing is generally focused on the topic but may include extraneous or loosely related material. An organizational pattern is apparent, although some lapses may occur. The paper exhibits some sense of completeness or wholeness. The support, including word choice, is adequate, although development may be uneven. There is little variation in sentence structure, and most sentences are complete. The paper generally follows the conventions of mechanics, usage, and spelling.
>
> 3 Points - The writing is generally focused on the topic but may include extraneous or loosely related material. An organizational pattern has been attempted, but the paper may lack a sense of completeness or wholeness. Some support is included but development is erratic. Word choice is adequate but may be limited, predictable, or occasionally vague. There is little, if any, variation in sentence structure. Knowledge of the conventions of mechanics and usage is usually demonstrated, and commonly used words are usually spelled correctly. (Florida Bureau of Education Information and Assessment Services, 1993: 10-11)

Two points are scored when the writing is loosely related to the topic and development of support is inadequate. Only one point is scored when the writing minimally addresses the topic.

Solution Strategy:

This writer has chosen Murray (1973) for the use of implementing various pre-writing activities. These activities will be beneficial to helping students to express their feelings. The writing process will be incorporated with the pre-writing activities to help students focus and direct their writing.

According to Cohen (1990), Davidson and O'Leary (1990), and Johnson and Johnson's (1985) cooperative learning techniques help students to extend their

thinking. When students can choose their own topics, they enjoy the written assignment and feel more confident in their writing. Cooperative learning provides students with an audience and immediate feedback on their writing. Students learn to trust their classmates for suggestions to improve the quality of their writing. Therefore, more learning will take place when students interact for solutions to their problems than when they compete with one another or work individually.

Teachers guiding students through their writing assignments is Maimon's (1988) suggestion for effective writing. Students will interact while providing an immediate audience for each other, thus motivating them to prepare quality work. Teachers are not required to correct every error on a student's writing, but they are responsible for helping students through each writing stage.

Observation activities will make students aware of their surroundings and enhance their writing creativity, according to Gaymer (1985). When students conduct research into their own experiences and feelings, they will decide how this knowledge will fit into their understanding of the world, according to Tchudi and Mitchell (1989).

Hillocks (1987) believes students have different types of knowledge they can use for resources. Teaching them to understand the basic level of thinking and how to convert this into data will teach students to look inside themselves for the resources. Pre-writing methods and activities will be used to help students produce longer and more effective writings as they begin to organized their thoughts. The various types of writing and the purposes for each will move

students from narrative writings to more complex levels of writing, such as persuasive writings.

Grabill (1992) indicated that the teaching of persuasive writing is important because the purpose of persuasive writing in a democratic society was to use it to get in touch with people who could make a difference. More critical thinking skills are used in persuasive writing than any other type of writing because a student has to examine a problem or situation and decide, by analyzing the problem, which side of the argument will be taken and be able to support this stand with facts and details.

Ownership of the topic and choice of writing is the viewpoint Ediger (1991) emphasized. Students should have a choice in their writing topics and the types of writing they will produce. They will become more creative and write effective pieces with personal worth. Stimulating and motivating students' thoughts through exciting activities will encourage them to produce quality work.

Finally, Britton (1970) suggested that students learned to write by writing. It is a skill that must be done over and over again to learn the structure of the language and how language can be manipulated to work for them in order to produce effective writings. Providing students with models of good writing will give the students examples to help them produce their own good writings. Knudson (1989) found that models and free-writing activities provided students with writing ideas that were effective strategies in helping students create quality essays. Providing students with the criteria for good writing, such as the holistic scoring model will give them a guide to writing.

All of these researchers provided this researcher with many strategies to motivate and assist students with their writing. This researcher used these methods to develop a sequential writing program effective for a wide range of abilities. It is hoped that the writing activities motivated students to improve their skills and find pleasures in the writing process.

CHAPTER III

Method

This researcher accomplished many tasks during the implementation of this sequential writing program. The writing curriculum was effective for the wide range of academic abilities this researcher dealt with and the writing activities motivated the students to write more to improve their skills and find pleasure in the writing process. Each week this author provided the students with writing activities that took them from the basic to the more advanced writing activities. The Prentice-Hall *Literature* (Silver) and *Write Source 2000* books were used to accommodate the students with writing resources and to present writing models. The planned activities were carried out during the twelve weeks of implementation and are attached as the students' syllabus for the writing unit.

The first assignment given to the students was to create an expository essay on a topic of their choice. This author did not want to hinder their creative thinking by choosing the topic for them. This expository writing assignment was used as the pre-test for this writing practicum. This pre-test indicated to this researcher that eighty percent of the students did not remember how to write an expository essay, since sixty percent did not do the assignment, twenty percent received a 2.5 on the holistic score rubric, and twenty percent wrote a different type of essay. This researcher did not preview the types of writing beforehand.

The first week included an orientation to the writing syllabus, a detailed

outline of the writing program, and the introduction to the holistic scoring rubric that was used for the evaluation of their writing. A rubric of the holistic scoring method was given to each student. This rubric was discussed in detail in class and students were told to use it for guidelines and reference.

The *Literature (Silver)* and *Write Source 2000* were used for the implementation of this researcher's practicum. The books offered many sections that introduce students to the writing process and the steps involved with each. They included instructions on writing paragraphs, and the process of working cooperatively in groups, from how to comment on writing and use guidelines for responding to writings. The students benefitted from having two textbooks that explained the writing process in different terms and for writing reference. When students knew how to comment on their classmates' writing and what questions to ask about the writing, they presented themselves in a more confident manner.

Reading to others, listening skills, note-taking skills, and skills for cooperative learning were discussed during the first week of class. This was necessary for students because they needed to learn how to read and share, listen, take notes carefully, and work together effectively and cooperatively. Active listening was an important skill for teleclass students because they could see their peers or teacher. Improving active listening skills helped the students learn how to focus as they were listening. Note taking methods showed students how to take notes on their classmates' writing while they continued to listen actively. These activities prepared them for the weeks that followed when they had to implement note taking skills. Finally, cooperative learning skills helped students work

together as a team and learn to trust and respond to each other.

The writing process was introduced in steps with familiar terms, and new terms that were interchangeable to the familiar ones. Thus students were introduced to different writing terminology and usage. Because students were not confident in using the steps in the writing process, this teacher required that each final writing assignment be mailed in with the prewriting activity and edited rough draft. Hillocks (1987) indicated that students wrote longer and more effectively when teachers instructed them on how to use prewriting activities. Maimon (1988) stated that most students turned in their writings without reading them after they wrote them. This requirement would ensure the students would have to read their assignment to correct the rough draft. While this requirement helped students practice the steps involved in the writing process, it also helped this researcher see how students made changes in their writings.

The assignment due the second week of class was a "Who am I?" essay. This assignment helped students concentrate on their favorite topic - themselves, and provided a familiar topic for writing. In this assignment they investigated their life by interviewing their parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, or family friends who told them about their life as they were growing up. This assignment focused on meaningful events in their life, or hobbies, and talents. This was the first assignment they shared with each other in the class. This assignment showed that the students could write creatively when they wrote on a topic they cared about and enjoyed. According to Johnson and Johnson (1985), students have developed trust and have taken risks more comfortably in a small group than

in a large class. He further indicated that cooperative learning significantly increased students' achievement and promoted positive interpersonal relationships. This researcher found that the students enjoyed listening to each other read their essays and they commented positively on each other's writings. This teacher required each student to listen carefully and make notes as other students read their compositions. (*Write Source 2000:* 29)

Week three focused on the Thinking to Learn section and the Basic Writing and Thinking Moves chart. The Thinking to Learn unit introduced sections on becoming a better thinker, why bother to think, how to think, basic writing and thinking, and the different levels of thinking (recalling information, understanding information, applying information, analyzing information, synthesizing information, and judging information). Each of these sections and the chart were discussed and explained to the students in detail. It showed how an individual mentally goes through the thinking process before they begin to write, their understanding of the writing process steps, and how each is important in developing their writing skills. (*Write Source 2000*: 305-330) This unit was important because Hillocks (1987) indicated that writing was an enormously complex task demanding at least four types of knowledge. The four types of knowledge necessary for the composing process are:

1. knowledge of the content to be written;
2. procedural knowledge that enables the manipulation of content;

3. knowledge of discourse structures, including the schemata underlying various types of writing, syntactic forms, and the conventions of punctuation and usage; and
4. procedural knowledge that enables the production of a piece of writing of a particular type.

Hillocks indicated that the first two types of knowledge were the students basic level of thinking, which was recalling information and then converting this information into content. For students to write more effectively they needed to know how to recall events and experiences from memory. Students in this target group learned the different levels of thinking and were asked to apply their knowledge in an expository essay. The results of this assignment indicated that students needed to differentiate between the types of writing and the purpose for each. On this assignment students merely summarized the chapter, but after a detailed discussion they had a better understanding of how to write an expository paper.

Week four directed students back to the basic building blocks of writing: composing of sentences, writing clear, concise and complete sentences; elements of paragraphs, the different types of writing, and the purpose of each. Models of different types of paragraphs (narrative, descriptive, expository, and persuasive) were shared and discussed with the students. This gave them an opportunity to see model paragraphs of good writing that had a strong main idea, and supporting details. They saw under-developed paragraphs and learned to recognize what was needed to make the paragraph an example of good writing. The fourth week

assignment was to write four different types of paragraphs (i.e. expository, narrative, descriptive, and persuasive) on a topic of their choice. Students reviewed the writing prompts (*Write Source 2000*: 39-41)

The students read and discussed four types of essays in class during the fifth week, and this discussion indicated to this researcher that more models were needed to help students understand the different types of writing, to recognize the elements of good writing, and what makes a particular type of essay. Knudson (1989) found that models and free writing activities provided students with writing ideas. These were effective strategies in helping students create quality essays. Britton's (1970) classic work suggested that students learned to write by writing. Writing was a skill that must be done over and over again to learn the structure of the language and how language can be manipulated in order to produce effective writings. Providing students with models of good writing will give them examples to produce their own good writings. Reading various types of essay models helped students see how authors developed a particular type of essay. The following essays were assigned from Prentice-Hall *Literature (Silver)* for reading and discussion:

A narrative essay, "Debbie" by James Herriot.

A humorous essay, "My Wild Irish Mother" by Jean Kerr.

A descriptive essay, "Forest Fire" by Anais Nin.

A expository essay, "The Indian All Around Us" by Bernard DeVoto.

A persuasive essay, "The Trouble with Television" by Robert MacNeil.

Expository and persuasive essays were the most difficult for students to write because they required more critical thinking skills in these two types of writing than with descriptive or narrative writings. This researcher focused on expository and persuasive writings for the next few assignments. For week six students were asked to write a persuasive essay for their parents about what effects watching television has had on their grades. Before they began to write, they were asked to think about what effects watching television has had on their studying habits and grades and how they could convince their parents to accept their point of view. This researcher found that forty percent of the students focused on the effects of television on grades and sixty percent focused on other things such as violent cartoons, having free H.B.O. and the other paid channels, and why there were not any educational or instructional programs after 7:00 a.m. This assignment was discussed again in class and the essay "The Trouble with Television" was read to help students understand how the writer's view convinced the reader to accept the author's opinion. According to Grabill (1992), critical thinking was utilized more in persuasive writing than in any other type of writing because a student has to examine a problem or situation presented, and then decide which side of the argument will be taken. Further, students must take an active stand in their appeal for or against something and support their view with facts.

The students were assigned three expository essays for week seven. The three topics were: 1. How would you describe color to a person who has been blind from birth. 2. How would you explain music to a person who has been deaf from birth. 3. Write about the contributions a particular culture has

made to life in the United States and narrow your topic to foods, a sport, or place names. The seventh and eighth week provided an opportunity for students to share their essays, respond, and to discuss with each other the strengths and weaknesses of the essays. This continued interaction and listening to each other helped students learn to express their viewpoint and support their statements with examples. Working and sharing thoughts together on the telephone was a type of cooperative learning. This type of cooperative learning provided students with an audience and immediate feedback on their writing. Students learned to trust their classmates for the suggestions to improve the quality of their writing. As Cohen (1990), Davidson and O'Leary (1990), and Johnson and Johnson (1985) indicated in their research, more learning takes place when students interacted for solutions to their problems than when they competed with one another or worked individually. Each student had to be alert and actively listen as a student read their writing, because they did not know who would be called on next to share their thoughts about the essay read.

Weeks nine through eleven concentrated on subject writing. The students learned to write a biography, a character sketch, and an autobiography. They also were required to conduct an interview and write a summary of it. The model presented for biography was "Harriet Tubman: Guide to Freedom" in the *Literature (Silver)*. This helped students to understand what was required to write a biography and presented an excellent model of biographical writing. Another useful source for biographical models was *Write Source 2000* (151-158). This book explained in detail what a biography was and presented guidelines for

writing a biography. The short essay models in this book were accompanied by comments which explained some of the techniques used. This encouraged discussion between the students.

Learning the difference between a biography, character sketch, and autobiography provided the students with an opportunity to write either about someone they admired or felt close to, or about experiences in their own life. Models were introduced to the students for the biography, character sketch, and autobiography. The character sketch model in the *Write Source 2000* provided a mixture of both physical and personal details which brought the character to life and helped the reader see the subject more vividly. The assignment referred the students back to the biography they had read about Harriet Tubman. They were requested to choose a person they admired and to select one incident in that person's life that portrayed the qualities they associated with that person. This assignment indicated to this researcher that the students were learning to write more vividly as they presented more details that brought their character to life. On of this researcher's students used the character sketch assignment as an opportunity to create a poem about her father that portrayed all of his wonderful qualities. Another student writer compared her grandmother to Mary Poppins and said that her grandmother's smile could light up a room. Still other students wrote about the hardships that made their subject special. This assignment proved to be enjoyable and brought satisfaction to the students when they shared their writings.

The autobiographical model titled "Of Men and Mountains" presented the

students with a "cliff hanging experience"endured by two young men on a mountain climb. The assignment asked students to select an event and retell it from "Doug's" point of view. They had to put themselves in his shoes and think about his feelings, and think about how his account of the event would be different from his friend, William. This was a challenge for the students, but after much discussion on the story and how the author wrote so vividly that readers could picture the incidents in their minds, the students were able to share some interesting concepts on how another character would see the same incident.

A second example of an autobiography, "I Know Why the Caged Birds Sings" by Maya Angelou provided students with another author's style and technique in subject writing. An expository essay was assigned for class discussion about the statement, "...I must always be intolerant of ignorance, but understanding of illiteracy." from this story. Many interpretations were given, but all the students agreed that although not everyone has the opportunity and resources available for education that does not hinder one's intellectual ability. Students enjoyed the interaction and responses they received from each other on the different topics discussed and learned that there is more than one way to interpret an idea or event.

Another assignment the students found to be enjoyable was the interview assignment. A review of the interviewing techniques provided students with appropriate guidelines. (*Write Source 2000*: 405-407) Students interviewed their parents about their high school years and wrote a biographical sketch from the interview. They asked questions about school, classes, teachers, school rules,

favorite hang-out, music, fashion trends, sports and so on. The students reported that they found it exciting listening to their parents' trip down memory lane. This assignment reminded students that their parents were not always adults and they too had interesting stories to tell. The students had a chance to see their parents on a different level and appreciate their parents from a different perspective. In class the students shared interview questions and laughed about the funny things their parents had done. This writing activity brought pleasure to the students and helped develop confidence they did not have in the beginning of the writing unit.

Week twelve began with an impromptu expository writing assignment which was to serve as post-testing for this writing unit. The expository writing assignments focused on topics that most students were familiar with chores and friendships. For the chore topic students were to think about one of their jobs or chores and write an expository essay explaining it. The other choice was for students to think about what friendship means to them and write an expository essay. The choice between these two topics gave students an opportunity to write about a subject with which they were familiar.

By this time the students had had several writing assignments and successes. Therefore they were able to express themselves more freely and seemed to feel more comfortable sharing their feelings. In class discussion students related that their favorite assignment had been to interview and write about their parents. They also shared with this researcher that they felt they had learned more about writing and suggested that the teacher provide even more opportunities for writing and class discussions with future students. Students

enjoyed sharing their writings after they realized their peers were there to help them improve their work. Sharing their comments was a learning experience for them and the bond and trust they developed by the end of the writing unit proved to be invaluable.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The holistic scoring rubric from the Florida Bureau of Education Information and Assessment Service was used by this researcher to determine the score points for this class. The holistic scoring rubric was developed by a committee of six individuals for the Eighth Grade Writing Assessment in spring 1993. The advisory committee determined the score points in the holistic scoring rubric by reading students' responses on previous sample writing assessments. When the Eighth Grade Writing Assessment Advisory Committee (Florida Bureau of Education Information and Assessment Services, 1993: 7) determined the score points in the holistic scoring rubric they assigned six points for excellent, three for average, and one for unrelated and undeveloped. The committee assigned half points, i.e. 5.5, 4.5, 3.5, 2.5, and 1.5 for papers scored by two readers with two closely related points. For example, if one reader assigned a six and another reader assigned a five, a 5.5 was assigned to the paper.

In the evaluation process this researcher considered the overall quality of students' writing. Students responded to their peers' writing in class, but evaluation and assigning a grade was determined by this researcher/teacher. This evaluation was an ongoing process devised to help students become aware of their abilities in written communication and improve their skills as writers. During the twelve weeks of writing assignments students learned about many different types

of writing and the purpose for each.

Four elements were considered within each rubric score:

1. Focus, which refers to how clearly the paper presents itself with a clear idea.
2. Organization, which refers to the plan of development.
3. Support, which refers to the quality of details used.
4. Conventions, which refers to the punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and different variations within the sentence structure.

The goal of this practicum was to increase students' writing quality so that all students achieved at least three points or better on the holistic scoring rubric for the Eighth Grade Writing Assessment exam. Unfortunately, the objective for three points was not achieved with the targeted group, but a score of 2.5 was achieved with the targeted group. Two students received a score of 3.0, one received a score of 2.5, and two receive a score of 2. The scores indicated that the students had a difficult time staying focused on the topic, had loosely related information, and an unorganized pattern of writing. There was little development in supporting details and their work contained many errors in conventions, especially spelling and punctuation. These results indicated to this researcher that more time was needed for students to practice and become successful in writing composition.

At the completion of this practicum, students understood the difference between evaluation and grading. They learned that evaluation is an indepth process which helps the student write better. The holistic scoring method used for pre-test and post-test determined the quality of the students writing in a holistic way.

The grade point average (G.P.A.) was measured on the four point system with four points being an A or excellent, three points a B or good, two points a C or average, and one point a D or below average, and an F or failure as used in this county's report card grading system. Each student's grade point was added and averaged for the class as a group. The goal was to increase the first semester grades of the targeted group from 1.8 G.P.A. to at least 2.8 G.P.A. This objective was not achieved, but the G.P.A. did increase to 2.75, which showed a .95 increase. The following table shows each student's language arts grade for the last three years for grades six, seven, and eight.

TABLE II

TARGET GROUP ACHIEVEMENT SCORES

STUDENTS	CTBS	1992 GPA	1993 GPA	1994 GPA*	**
1	32%	3	0	1	1
2	55%	4	4	4	4
3	79%	3	4	4	4
4	12%	1	0	0	***
5	32%	2	0	0	2

* First Semester

** Second Semester

*** Results were not computated because student left the county district

CHAPTER V

Recommendations

The results of the comprehensive writing curriculum project for eighth grade Home/Hospital students will be shared with the administration and teleclass instructors in the target county. This curriculum seemed moderately successful and proved to be useful for the students. This author will recommend its continued use by other teleclass teachers. Arrangements will be made by this writer, in cooperation with the district language arts supervisor, to share the results of this practicum with other middle school teachers. As a result of this practicum, this researcher prepared an activity book for future language arts teleclass instruction. It will include the sequence plan, the holistic scoring rubric, resources recommended such as *Write Source 2000* and *Literature (Silver)* book by Prentice-Hall.

The intended result of this practicum was to increase grades and improve the quality of writing of eighth grade Home/Hospital teleclass students. The way this was achieved was through development and implementation of a comprehensive writing curriculum. The writing curriculum helped students develop skill and confidence in their ability to create expository, narrative, descriptive, persuasive writings along with other types of writings such as: biography, autobiography, character sketch, and writing from another's point of view. Through the research conducted in this practicum it appeared to this

researcher that the targeted group of middle school teleclass students became more interested and excited writers when they were given the tools and the means to explore their own ideas and express themselves through writing.

It is the recommendation of this researcher that teachers should plan to spend at least eighteen weeks on the writing unit with ample time for discussion and responses about the strengths and weakness of their students' writing. Providing the students with ample opportunity for discussion and constructive criticism will help them recognize that the way each student writes may be different but is acceptable. Students will learn that the more writing they do, and the various types of writing they practice, will help them become more confident about their ability to use their language.

The development and implementation of this practicum has taught this researcher that writing instruction with middle school students must proceed from the personal mode the autobiographical sketch to the more complex expository or persuasive essay. Students will learn to write more effectively and more creatively when given the definitions and tools for developing writing skills. Constructive criticism from their peers as well as continued evaluations by the teacher will help students develop confidence in expressing themselves through writing. It is hoped that once students develop skill and confidence in a language arts writing class, they will carry over that ability to other class assignments and life experiences.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Florida Grade 8 Writing Assessment District Results

Spring 1993 and 1994

Florida Grade 8 Writing Assessment

Spring 1993

DISTRICT RESULTS

District Code: 64
District: VOLUSIA COUNTY SCHOOLS
No. of Students Tested in the District: 3,075
No. of Participating Schools in the District: 13

Description of Writing Scores*	Score	Writing to Explain: District Student Count 1,549	Writing to Convince: District Student Count 1,526
A paper scored 6 tightly focuses on the topic, has a well-planned organizational pattern, has ample development of supporting ideas, and, with few exceptions, uses spelling and punctuation conventions correctly.	6	--	—
A paper scored 5.5 was scored 5 by one reader and 6 by a second reader.	5.5	1%	—
A paper scored 5 focuses on the topic, may have lapses in the organizational pattern, has adequate development of supporting ideas, and generally uses spelling and punctuation conventions correctly.	5	4%	3%
A paper scored 4.5 was scored 4 by one reader and 5 by a second reader.	4.5	6%	2%
A paper scored 4 focuses on the topic but may contain extraneous or loosely related information, displays some lapses in the organizational pattern, has some supporting ideas that are not developed, and may have occasional lapses in spelling and punctuation conventions.	4	21%	12%
A paper scored 3.5 was scored 3 by one reader and 4 by a second reader.	3.5	18%	7%
A paper scored 3 generally focuses on the topic but may contain extraneous or loosely related information, exhibits some evidence of an organizational pattern, has little development of supporting ideas, and may contain some errors in spelling and punctuation conventions.	3	29%	38%
A paper scored 2.5 was scored 2 by one reader and 3 by a second reader.	2.5	9%	11%
A paper scored 2 may be only slightly related to the topic because it includes extraneous or loosely related information, exhibits little evidence of an organizational pattern, has minimal development of supporting ideas, and may contain many errors in spelling and punctuation conventions.	2	11%	21%
A paper scored 1.5 was scored 1 by one reader and 2 by a second reader.	1.5	1%	2%
A paper scored 1 minimally addresses the topic because it includes unrelated or undeveloped information, exhibits no evidence of an organizational pattern, has no development of supporting ideas, and may contain many errors in spelling and punctuation conventions.	1	1%	3%
A paper scored U does not respond to the topic, cannot be read, or does not contain a response.	U	1%	1%
Average score for each type of writing:		3.3	2.9
Average score for both types of writing combined:		District 3.1	

* The score for each student's paper is the average of the scores from two independent readers.

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Florida Writing Assessment
Grade 8

Spring 1994

DISTRICT RESULTS

District Code: 64
District: VOLUSIA COUNTY SCHOOLS
No. of Students Tested in the District: 3,165
No. of Participating Schools in the District: 15

Description of Writing Scores

For this assessment, students are given 45 minutes to read their assigned topic, plan what to write, and then write their papers.

Score	Description
6	A paper scored 6 tightly focuses on the topic, has a well-planned organizational pattern, has ample development of supporting ideas, and with few exceptions uses spelling and punctuation conventions correctly.
5.5	A paper scored 5.5 was scored 5 by one reader and 6 by a second reader.
5	A paper scored 5 focuses on the topic, may have lapses in the organizational pattern, has adequate development of supporting ideas, and generally uses spelling and punctuation conventions correctly.
4.5	A paper scored 4.5 was scored 4 by one reader and 5 by a second reader.
4	A paper scored 4 focuses on the topic but may contain extraneous or loosely related information, displays some lapses in the organizational pattern, has some supporting ideas that are not developed, and may have occasional errors in spelling and punctuation conventions.
3.5	A paper scored 3.5 was scored 3 by one reader and 4 by a second reader.
3	A paper scored 3 generally focuses on the topic but may contain extraneous or loosely related information, exhibits some evidence of an organizational pattern, has little development of supporting ideas, and may contain some errors in spelling and punctuation conventions.
2.5	A paper scored 2.5 was scored 2 by one reader and 3 by a second reader.
2	A paper scored 2 may be only slightly related to the topic because it includes extraneous or loosely related information, exhibits little evidence of an organizational pattern, has minimal development of supporting ideas, and may contain many errors in spelling and punctuation conventions.
1.5	A paper scored 1.5 was scored 1 by one reader and 2 by a second reader.
1	A paper scored 1 minimally addresses the topic because it includes unrelated or undeveloped information, exhibits no evidence of an organizational pattern, has no development of supporting ideas, and may contain many errors in spelling and punctuation conventions.

Number and Percentage of Students Receiving Each Score*

Score	Writing to Explain		Writing to Convince	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
6	5	<1%	1	<1%
5.5	2	<1%	6	<1%
5	22	1%	35	2%
4.5	42	3%	55	4%
4	148	9%	174	11%
3.5	157	10%	166	11%
3	495	31%	393	25%
2.5	244	15%	238	15%
2	351	22%	367	23%
1.5	66	4%	63	4%
1	43	3%	53	3%
Response Not Related to the Assigned Topic:	13	1%	7	<1%
No Response or Response Could Not Be Read:	11	1%	8	1%
Number Tested on Each Type of Writing:	1,599		1,566	
Average Score for Each Type of Writing:	2.8		2.8	
Number Tested on Both Types of Writing:	3,165			
Average Score for Both Types of Writing:	2.8			

* Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. If the percentage is less than 0.5%, it is written as <1%.

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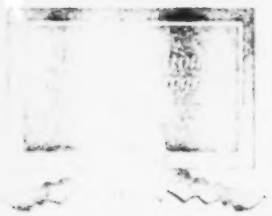
Appendix B

Florida Grade 8 Writing Assessment School Results

Spring 1994



Florida Writing Assessment
Grade 8
Spring 1994

SCHOOL RESULTS

District: VOLUSIA COUNTY SCHOOLS
School: COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE
No. of Students Tested in the School: 5
District-School Code: 64-9001

Description of Writing Scores

For this assessment, students are given 45 minutes to read their assigned topic, plan what to write, and then write their papers.

Score	Description
6	A paper scored 6 tightly focuses on the topic, has a well-planned organizational pattern, has ample development of supporting ideas, and with few exceptions uses spelling and punctuation conventions correctly.
5.5	A paper scored 5.5 was scored 5 by one reader and 6 by a second reader.
5	A paper scored 5 focuses on the topic, may have lapses in the organizational pattern, has adequate development of supporting ideas, and generally uses spelling and punctuation conventions correctly.
4.5	A paper scored 4.5 was scored 4 by one reader and 5 by a second reader.
4	A paper scored 4 focuses on the topic but may contain extraneous or loosely related information, displays some lapses in the organizational pattern, has some supporting ideas that are not developed, and may have occasional errors in spelling and punctuation conventions.
3.5	A paper scored 3.5 was scored 3 by one reader and 4 by a second reader.
3	A paper scored 3 generally focuses on the topic but may contain extraneous or loosely related information, exhibits some evidence of an organizational pattern, has little development of supporting ideas, and may contain some errors in spelling and punctuation conventions.
2.5	A paper scored 2.5 was scored 2 by one reader and 3 by a second reader.
2	A paper scored 2 may be only slightly related to the topic because it includes extraneous or loosely related information, exhibits little evidence of an organizational pattern, has minimal development of supporting ideas, and may contain many errors in spelling and punctuation conventions.
1.5	A paper scored 1.5 was scored 1 by one reader and 2 by a second reader.
1	A paper scored 1 minimally addresses the topic because it includes unrelated or undeveloped information, exhibits no evidence of an organizational pattern, has no development of supporting ideas, and may contain many errors in spelling and punctuation conventions.

Number and Percentage of Students Receiving Each Score*

Score	Writing to Explain		Writing to Convince	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
6	0	0%	0	0%
5.5	0	0%	0	0%
5	0	0%	0	0%
4.5	0	0%	0	0%
4	0	0%	0	0%
3.5	0	0%	0	0%
3	0	0%	1	33%
2.5	1	50%	0	0%
2	1	50%	2	67%
1.5	0	0%	0	0%
1	0	0%	0	0%
Response Not Related to the Assigned Topic:	0	0%	0	0%
No Response or Response Could Not Be Read:	0	0%	0	0%

	Writing to Explain	Writing to Convince
Number Tested on Each Type of Writing:	2	3
Average Score for Each Type of Writing:	2.3	2.3

Number Tested on Both Types of Writing:	5
Average Score for Both Types of Writing:	2.3

* Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. If the percentage is less than 0.5%, it is written as <1%.

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Appendix C

Writing Activity Booklet

Writing Syllabus

Literature (Silver) - Understanding the Writing Process. Read and discuss pages 750 -757.

Write Source 2000 - Interviewing techniques, pages 405 - 407,
The Writing Process, pages 011 - 027,
Group Advising pages 028-029
Starting Points pages 030 - 042
Building Paragraphs pages 075 - 089
Read and discuss the techniques and guidelines for the above sections.

Assignment: Write a "Who Am I" essay. Investigate your life by interviewing your parents, brothers, sisters, and relatives or friends to find out about your earlier life. Write about meaningful events, hobbies, talents, and special interests.

Write Source 2000 - Thinking to Learn pages 305 - 330. Read and discuss the sections on becoming a better thinker, why bother to think, how to think, basic writing and thinking, and the different levels of thinking such as recalling information, understanding information, applying information, analyzing information, synthesizing information, judging information.

Assignment: Expository essay. Write an essay about the different levels of thinking and describe each level explaining how it is used in the classroom.

Write Source 2000 - Types of Paragraphs - pages 077-080. Read and discuss each of the four types of paragraphs and read the models presented. Discuss the differences between the paragraphs.

Assignments: Write a descriptive, narrative, expository, and persuasive paragraph. Topic of your choice. Students review the writing prompts from the *Write Source 2000*, pages 039-041 for ideas.

Literature (Silver) - pages 462 - 466 " The Trouble with Television" a persuasive essay. A persuasive essay presents a writer's views in order to convince the reader to accept the author's opinion or to act a certain way. The writer will usually offer argument, or reasons to support the position taken, and may try to stir your concern and emotions so you will act toward the piece.

Assignment: Write a persuasive essay to your parents about the effects of watching television on your grades. Before you begin writing think about the effect watching television has had on your studying habits and grades. Convince your parents to accept your point of view.

Assignment: *Literature (Bronze)* Write two expository papers. The topics are:
1) How would you describe color to a person who has been blind from birth.
2) How would you explain music to a person who has been deaf from birth.

Literature (Silver): pages 457 -461, "The Indian All Around Us" is a short, nonfiction piece that explains or gives information about a topic. The word "expository" simply means to give information about something or to explain what is difficult to understand.

Assignment: *Literature (Silver)* - page 461. Write an expository essay about the contributions a particular culture has made to life in the United States. You may want to narrow you topic to foods, a sport, or place names. Make sure you have supported your ideas.

Assignment: Expository writing prompt in class. Everyone has jobs or chores, think about one of your jobs or chores and write an expository essay explaining why you do your job or chore.

Literature (Silver): Pages 383 - 391. Biography "Harriet Tubman: Guide to Freedom" is an account of a person's life as written by another person. A biography tells you about the events in the person's life, focusing on achievements or difficulties the person had to overcome. The biographer must create a living, believable character and stick to the known facts about the person.

Write Source 2000 - Writing Phase Biographies - pages 151 - 158. Discuss how to write a biography and read the models presented.

Write Source 2000 - Character Sketch pages 159-165. Read and discuss the character sketch and how to write a character sketch, using physical and personal characteristics as a guide to bring the character to life. Review the model character sketch.

Literature (Silver) - page 391 Assignment: Write a Character Sketch. Choose a person whom you admire and select one incident in the person's life that portrays the qualities you most associate with that person. The incident may be one in which the person overcame an obstacle. Portray your subject vividly.

Literature (Silver) - pages 420 - 428. "Of Men and Mountains" is an autobiography. The narrator is the author who tells his or her experiences from the first-person point of view, speaking as "I." As you experience the story through the author's own eyes and mind you will know what the author recalls, feels and observes about the experience.

Assignment: *Literature (Silver)* - page 428. Writing from another point of view. Select an event in this selection and retell it from Doug's point of view. What did Doug think about the event? What were his feelings? How will Doug's account of the event be different from William's? Make sure you maintain a consistent point of view.

Write Source 2000 - pages 133-143. Writing Phase Autobiographies. Read and discuss how to write an autobiography and read models.

Literature (Silver): pages 402 - 409. from "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" is an autobiography, a person's own account of his or her life. You experience the writer's story through his or her eyes -- knowing not only what he or she observes and recalls, but also what he or she thinks and feels about the experience. The autobiography provides you with information about the subject from the subject.

Assignment: *Literature (Silver)* - page 409. Choose an incident in your life that is important to you Use the first-person point of view and write an autobiographical sketch.

Assignment: *Literature (Silver)* - page 407 write an expository paragraph about the statement, ".... I must always be intolerant of ignorance, but understanding of illiteracy." from the essay "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings."

Literature (Silver): pages 468 - 471 Observation essay "Shooting Stars." Observation is the act of looking or noticing an object or event carefully and objectively (without judging).

Write Source 2000 - pages 166-169. Read and discuss observation techniques. Read the model on page 170.

Assignment: Use the examples from *Write Source 2000*, page 166 for your observation topic. Choose the location and try to concentrate on what you see, not on what you feel or think. Write your observation essay clearly and factually. Describe your details completely so others can visualize them in their mind.

Write Source 2000 - Review interviewing techniques pages 405-407.

Literature (Silver) - pages 392-401, "Roberto Clemente: A Bittersweet Memoir" is a biographical piece, this writing is usually written by a relative or a personal friend of the subject. This writer has based his memoir on interviews and anecdotes.

Assignment: Interview your parents about their high school years and write a biographical sketch about one of your parents. Ask them questions about school, classes, teachers, rules, favorite hang-out, music, fashion trends, sports, etc. Set a time when it is convenient for them to talk and enjoy their trip down memory lane with them.

Write Source 2000 - Writing a Summary, pages 184-186. Read and discuss the guidelines for writing a summary. Read the model on pages 185 - 186.

Assignment: Choose an article from a magazine and write a summary. Follow the guidelines on page 185. Include the title, date, volume, and page number from the magazine.

Holistic Scoring Rubric

The following holistic scoring rubric will be used to evaluate and assign points to your writings.

6 Points - The writing is focused, purposeful, and reflects insight into the writing situation, thus tightly focuses on the topic. The organizational pattern is well-planned and provides for a logical progression of ideas. Ample support of ideas are substantial, specific, relevant, concrete, and/or illustrative. The writing demonstrates a mature command of language (word choice) with freshness of expression. The sentence structure is varied, and sentences are complete. Few, if any, convention errors occur in mechanics, usage, and punctuation.

5 Points - The writing focuses on the topic, and its organizational pattern provides for a progression of ideas, although some lapses may occur. It has adequate development of supporting ideas, and generally uses spelling and punctuation conventions correctly.

4 Points - The writing focuses on the topic, but may include extraneous or loosely related information, displays some lapses in organizational pattern, has some supporting ideas that are not developed, and may have occasional errors in spelling and punctuation conventions.

3 Points - The writing generally focuses on the topic, but may contain loosely related information. An organizational pattern has been attempted, has little development of supporting ideas, and may contain some errors in spelling and punctuation conventions.

2 Points - The writing may be only slightly related to the topic because it contains loosely related information, exhibits little evidence of an organizational pattern, has minimal development of supporting ideas, and may contain many errors in spelling and punctuation conventions.

1 Point - The writing minimally addresses the topic because it includes unrelated or undeveloped information, exhibits no evidence of an organizational pattern, has no development of supporting ideas, and may contain many errors in spelling and punctuation conventions.